

INVASION OF THE WEIRD TREES

Volume 4
Don't turn your back on them!
2008 Edition

TREES....

....they come in all shapes and sizes. They fill the air with sweet, fragrant scents of spring blossoms, and splash the landscape with brilliant colors in the fall. They cool the air with their shade and provide a barrier against the harsh winter wind. They add beauty and comfort to our lives, as well as furnishing us with thousands of products we use every day.

But this booklet isn't about the beautiful trees, and it doesn't focus on the bounties of Mother Nature. It doesn't ask you to "thank a tree" for the oxygen you breathe, or "hug a tree" in an affectionate display of gratitude. Some of the creatures featured in this publication might evoke more fear than affection. In fact, the thought of hugging some of these freaks of nature might be downright repulsive.

Have you ever been driving down a road or walking in a woods when you've happened upon a tree that is just so unusual that you are compelled to stop and stare? Have you ever said to yourself, "I wish I had my camera to capture this on film."?

Since the year 2000, many Hoosiers have been on a quest to do just that--to capture on film what words alone could not describe. After receiving hundreds of entries, our District Foresters employed a critical eye, years of arboreal experience, and sometimes a slightly twisted sense of reality to select the "weirdest" tree for each county. The results of their selections are highlighted in this booklet. If a previous winner was compared to its new competition and again judged to be the "weirdest" for that county, it retained its dubious title.

If your county is not represented, or if you know of a tree that you think is more weird than the one shown for your county, get your camera tuned up and your hiking boots ready. The deadline to enter the next Weird Tree Search is April 30, 2012 (entries are accepted anytime up to that date).

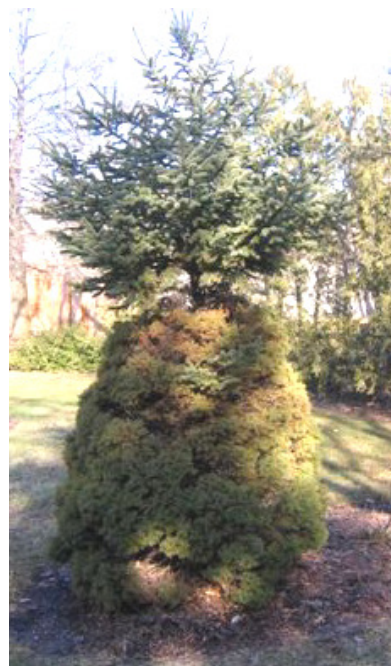
And now, witness the Invasion (if you dare to proceed).....

* denotes a tree that has retained its status from the 2004 edition of "Invasion of the Weird Trees" as the "weirdest" in its county



Double vision
plagues home-
owner

*Adams county, submitted by
Ruth Brown



Just a little off
the top, please

Allen county, submitted by
Jeff Johnson



*Benton county, submitted by
Bonnie Dubich

Serpent in paradise
no longer peddling
apples



*Bartholomew county, submitted by
Mauri & Debra Young

Long arm of law
works undercover



Starving tree down to
bark and bone

*Blackford county, submitted by
Bonnie Dubich

Give me
an “h”....



*Brown county, submitted by
Dave Mason



*Boone county, submitted by John Artman

Loch Ness makes
Hoosier appearance

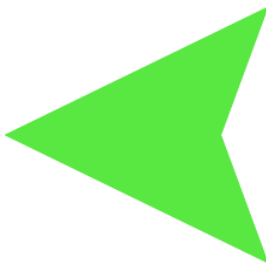
Give me
another “H”



*Knox county,
submitted by Gary Rodney Smith



*Clark county, submitted by
Amil Kleinert



Split personalities
revealed



Oh, what a tangled
web we weave!



*Vermillion county, submitted by
Allen & Joyce Shew



Miami county, submitted by
William Berkheiser

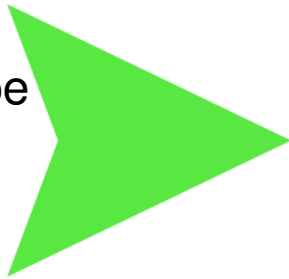


High five!



Clay county, submitted by Jeanette Huffman

The Jack-alope
tree



*Clinton county, submitted by Nancy Martin



Tree shocked
by its receding
bark



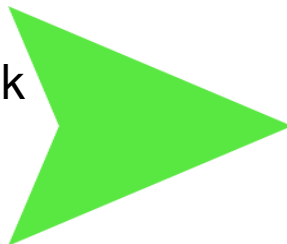
Crawford county, submitted by
Dewey Shelton

Give me a hug, son



*Daviess county, submitted by Janet Gregory

Tree survives by hook
or by crook



*Decatur county, submitted by Terry Wells



Reach out and
touch someone

Tree forms bridge
over troubled waters

*DeKalb county, submitted by
Sirleine M. Smith



*Delaware county, submitted by Anson Tooley



*Dubois county, submitted by
Dwight E. Seal

Tree caught doing
donuts in yard

Oh, it's just a little
middle-aged spread



Elkhart county, submitted by
Orville Pollock



Tree tells
fish story

*Fayette county, submitted by Donald Hollcroft

Unsightly warts
blamed on
tree toad



*Floyd county, submitted by
Natalie Pomeroy

Arboreal
amour!



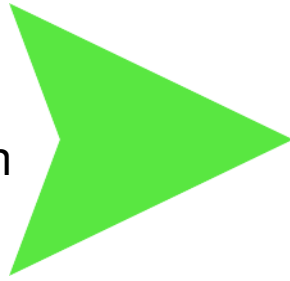
*Fountain county, submitted by Don Bickel

“Ugly duckling”
aspires to be
Christmas tree

*Fulton county, submitted by Laura Snipes

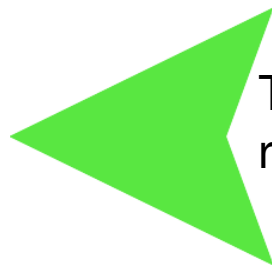


Lonely heart
seeks companion



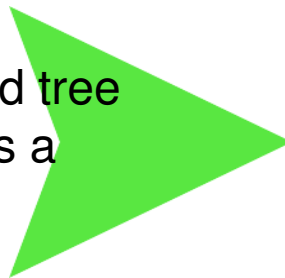
*Gibson county, submitted by Kayce McCoy

Tree insists on
right to bear arms



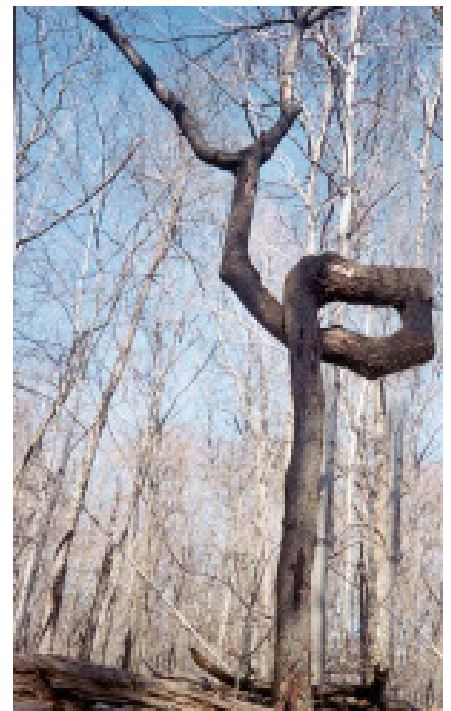
*Grant county, submitted by Pat Eicher

Confused tree
thinks it's a
"P" plant



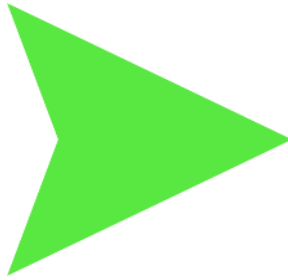
Hamilton county, submitted by
John Bundy

I speak for
the trees

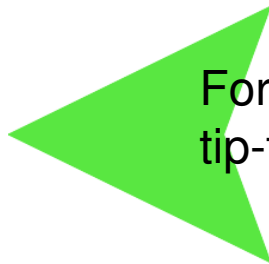


*Greene county, submitted by
Rick Morron

Me? I'm not weird--
just a little twisted



Hancock county
submitted by
Eugene & Myrtle
Turner



Forest giant caught
tip-toeing through woods



*Harrison county, submitted by Paul Harmon

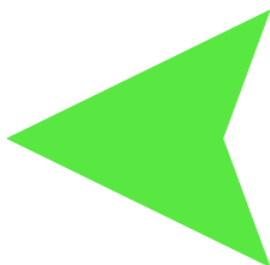
Twist of fate
unites trees



*Hendricks county,
submitted by Carol Ford



*Henry county, submitted by
Marvin & Judith Webber



Sick sycamore's
temperature skyrockets

Old neighborhood
terrorized by
alien life form



Huntington county, submitted by Mary Brooks



*Howard county, submitted by Chris Dimitt

Keep looking--there's
got to be a loophole

Strange growth between
fingers has arborists
concerned



*Jasper county, submitted by Bernita Hagadon

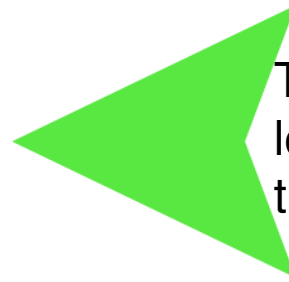


*Jackson county, submitted by Linda L. Smith

Tree morphs into rhino!



* Jay county, submitted by Bettie Jacobs



Tree found
loafing on
the job



Jennings county, submitted by
Bill & Dixie Gerhard

More split
personalities
discovered in
the woods

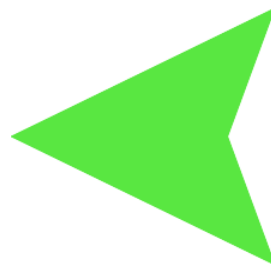
Put up your
dukes and fight
like a tree!



* Jefferson county, submitted
by Mike Underwood



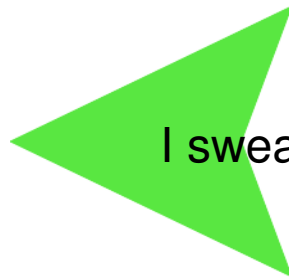
* Johnson county, submitted by Linda Cummins



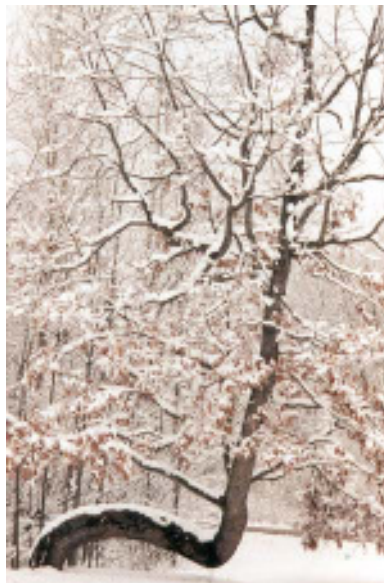
Looks like another
lean year for
this tree



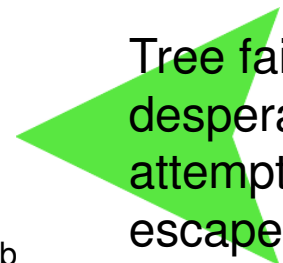
Kosciusko county, submitted by Joan Laudeman



I swear, it was THIS big!



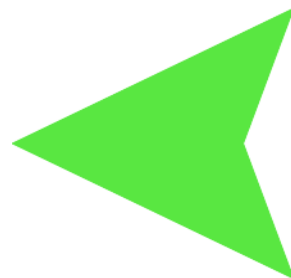
*Lagrange county, submitted by, Renee Harville



Tree fails in desperate attempt to escape woods



*Laporte county, submitted by Richard Magiera



Child possesses mysterious tree-bending powers

Tree professes its honesty;
Pinocchio is skeptical



*Lawrence county, submitted by H.C. Cummings



Alien spawn

(growth beneath yardstick is not a limb, but a tree of a different species)



Marshall county, submitted by Howard Hochstetler

Who you callin'
LUMPY?

Other forest trees
left out of the loop



Madison county, submitted by George Beck

Tree finds
weening
offspring
difficult



*Marion county,
submitted by Bill Howard



*Martin county,
submitted by Bonnie Dubich



*Monroe county, submitted by Carol Ritter

Tree-octopus hybrid
has scientists
scratching their heads

Trees unite after
long separation



*Morgan county, submitted by
Ray DeBaets

Tree goes fishing, but
line gets tangled



*Montgomery county, submitted by
Wes Crawford

Confused
tree sprouts
elephant trunk

*Newton county, submitted by
Duane Datzman





*Noble county, submitted by
Richard D. Johnson

Tree flexes muscle to
impress wildlife



Orange county, submitted by Jim Cassidy

In each of us is an
inner tree pushing
to get out



Owen county,
submitted by Patricia Herron

Caution:
dangerous hairpin
turn in woods

Beech tree undergoes
bonding experience



*Parke county,
submitted by Karen Staub



*Pike county, submitted by Lu Froehle

More than corn
grown in Indiana

Perry county, submitted by
Dave Schwinghamer



“When I grow up, I’m going
to be a giant redwood!”

No need to explore
caves to find stalactites
in Indiana



Porter county, submitted by
Brian Williams

Wayward tree
has parent
concerned



*Posey county, submitted by
Jack Finck



*Pulaski county, submitted by Steve Knebel

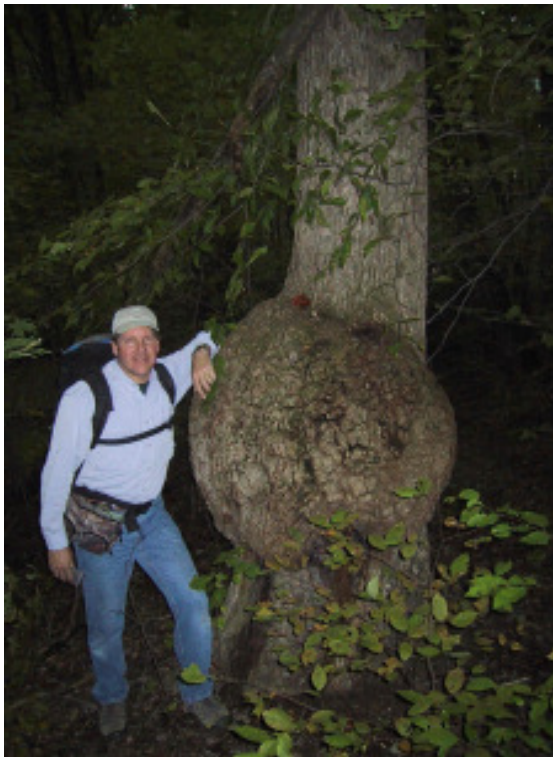
Enlarged heart
puts tree at risk

"Tree-in-a-can"
latest craze



Putnam county, submitted by
Larry Bonesteel

*Scott county, submitted by Mr. Weber



Doctor listens for seedling
heartbeat in expectant tree



*Ripley county, submitted by Don Tolbert

Narcoleptic tree snoozes
through first three decades



St. Joseph county, submitted by
Wayne Doolittle

I've heard of topping a tree,
but how can a tree be "bottomed"?



*Spencer county, submitted by Bobby Joe Smith

Starke county, submitted by
Diane Lambert



Mumps epidemic
plagues tree

Trees make up for
iron deficiency



*Shelby county, submitted by Mary Spurgin



*Sullivan county, submitted by Bruce Finkbiner

Foresters study
poor posture
in trees



*Steuben county, submitted by Paul Beckwith

All-points
bulletin issued
for sign thief



Tippecanoe county, submitted by Marie Hamstra

Former home of toad has
tree wondering wart to do

Petrified pitchfork a clue to
forest's agricultural past



*Vanderburgh county, submitted by Bob Kessner



*Warrick county, submitted by
John & Linda Gray

Open Arms Hotel
welcomes wildlife



Vigo county, submitted by Lindsay Roth

Tree anointed by shaggy dog
undergoes transformation

Tree found with antennae;
neighbors report
great reception



*Wabash county, submitted by
Danielle Jean Knable

Yes, diving in the woods was
not smart...now grab my leg
and pull me out, please!



Warren county, submitted by
Tony & Lynanne Martin



Washington county,
submitted by Paula Weaver

Don't worry,
little fellas,
we'll protect you



Franklin county, submitted by
Tim Hinderberger

Next time you need a hug,
head to the woods



Wayne county, submitted
by Bob Mayer

Go IU!!!



*Wells county, submitted by
Charles Neuenschwander



Whitley county, submitted by
Renee Enyeart

Woodland sage
retires to life in
the city



Randolph county, submitted
by Sheila Corbin

Maple masquerades
as evergreen

I am NOT
a crook!



*White county, submitted by Eleanor L. Hickman

They're Weird—But How Did They Get That Way?



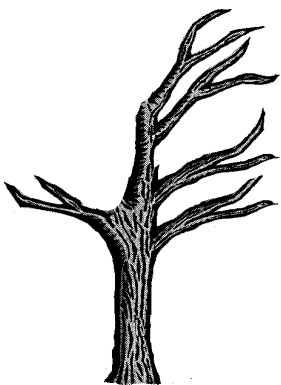
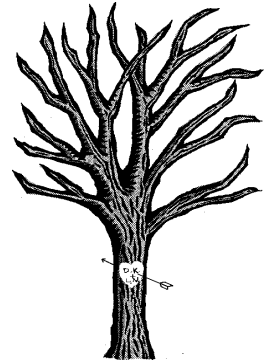
Science is founded upon explaining the unknown and making sense of the weird. But some freaks of nature even defy scientific explanation. The collection of weird trees displayed in this booklet provide a challenging exercise for modern investigators.

A team of highly trained and experienced DNR scientists agreed to examine these specimens and, if possible, determine the causes of their weirdness. Here are their findings:

SYMPTOM: Embedded object

DIAGNOSIS: A common notion about trees is that an object fixed to the tree will get higher as the tree grows. That is not correct. Trees grow from the tips of the branches, and once something is attached to the tree, it will not get higher over time. It will, however, be eaten. Trees grow not only in height, but also in girth. As the tree grows in diameter, it also will “eat” or grow around any object fixed to the tree or even next to it. Hence, a nail placed into a tree when it is only a sapling will be “consumed” and be deep inside the trunk when that tree reaches maturity. Trees will eat nails, wires, cables, signs, and fenceposts. Trees will even sprout and grow up through abandoned fence, machinery, or almost anything else. As the trees grow, they will slowly grow around any foreign object. Often, these deeply embedded objects cannot be detected when the tree is mature. Because these hidden objects can be very dangerous if they come into contact with a saw, it is not recommended to nail or fasten anything to a tree — The tree will eat it! Trees pictured in this booklet have embedded a sign and a fence post. The sign was obviously nailed to the tree, but the fencepost was placed too close to the tree’s trunk. These embedded objects cannot be safely removed. Over time, the trees will continue to “consume” the objects until the trees have completely embedded them inside the tree’s trunks.

—Jayson Waterman, District Forester



SYMPTOM: Unusual branching

DIAGNOSIS: Unusual or abnormal branching is normally the result of some type or injury. If the top of a tree is damaged, the side branches closest to the point of damage will turn up towards the sky and establish dominance. In other instances, a lower branch may become damaged or distorted. If it continues to receive enough sunlight to maintain growth, it will continue to grow in its distorted condition. Early Indian tribes have been known to bend the branches of trees to permanently mark the location of trails.

Insects such as mites, fungi and dwarf mistletoe can all cause the over stimulation of dormant buds which results in the formation of dense mats of branches commonly called witches’ broom. And lastly, sometimes the genetics of a tree just go a little haywire and you get branching that is unusual. Many common ornamental varieties that are prized for their unusual appearance are the result of natural genetic mutation.

—Chuck Ratts, District Forester

SYMPTOM: Multiple stems

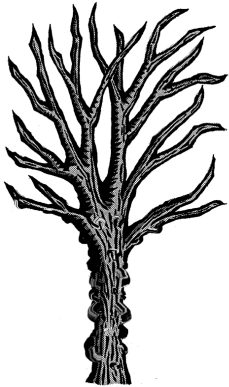
DIAGNOSIS: Some multi-stemmed trees can be explained as a result of phototropism. Plants are attracted to light. When a tree is knocked or blown over, the side branches feel the need for light and grow toward it. It has been said Indians used to do this on purpose to identify hunting spots, or to give them directions through a woods.

Other trees with multiple stems are a result of stump sprouts. When a tree is harvested, buds beneath the bark sprout as a survival tactic. Their chance of becoming new trees is dependent on the size of the original tree and their location on the stump. Those closest to the ground have a better chance. Most hardwood trees will produce sprouts. Usually they will total 2, 3 or 4 stems. Some very weird trees may have more sprouts that originate higher on the stump. My wife and I have 3 Stump sprouts named Michael, Steven, and Eric. Also a secondary sprout, Alexandra was recently born to Steven and his wife Erin.

—Don Stump, District Forester

**SYMPTOM: Warts, Bumps and Burls**

DIAGNOSIS: Teenagers and witches take heart. Mother Nature has cursed some things beside you with ugly bumps and warts. Trees have bumps, warts, and burls. The teenager fears the facial bumps before a date, the witch looks much more evil with warts on her nose and chin, and nothing disfigures a tree quite like an unexplained burl. The teenager grows past his problem, the witch is only imagined, but the tree remains ugly forever. Best of all we learn to love and appreciate things because of their differences from the norm.



Whenever people see a tree with unique bumps and burls the question is, “Boy, what caused that?” I continue to ask the same question and receive answers from, “I don’t know.” to “We think maybe....” Insects, damage to the bark,

viruses, and mutated growth buds have all been suspected. Maybe we should just accept this unique gift and not ask why.

We do know that inside these ugly, abnormal growths is some of the most interesting grain patterns found in any wood. These distinct woods are highly prized for tables, clocks, bowls, and other decorative products. Few of us can look at these beautiful things made possible by ugly without wondering why. I think I want it to remain a mystery. That way I can enjoy creating my own explanation for each one I find and realize the value of diversity.

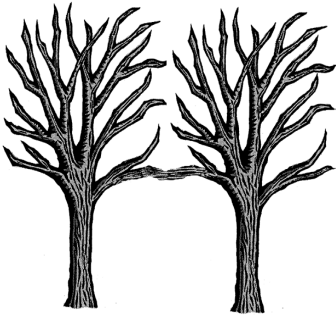
—Rex Gambill, former District Forester

SYMPTOM: Crooked or misdirected trunk

DIAGNOSIS: All plants grow upward, reaching for the sun! These examples of unusually growing trees provide a lesson in how persistent plants are in sticking to this rule. Each of these trees has experienced some physical damage. Perhaps a windstorm blew down another tree and it landed across this tree when it was much smaller. As side branches on that bent stem reached for light, they took over growth dominance. Many years later, these side branches now appear as the dominant stem(s) of the tree. Early Americans used this characteristic of trees to mark trails. A sapling bent over and tied down can be pointed in the direction of a trail. This growing trail marker will last for many years with no maintenance.

—Steve Marling, District Forester



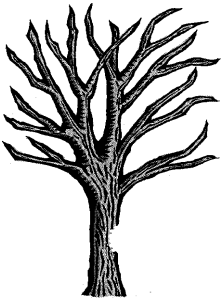


SYMPTOM: Trees connected together

DIAGNOSIS: What appear to be natural grafts between two trees or between two branches of the same tree are not that uncommon. Anyone who spends a lot of time in the woods has seen this phenomenon. How does it happen? Apparently as the trees grow in diameter extreme pressure builds at the point where a projecting limb contacts another tree or another part of the same tree. If both members are parts of the same tree then both are genetically identical and a true graft may occur. If there are two trees of the same species then the genetic similarity may allow a true graft. The artificial grafting of fruit trees and ornamentals is a routine procedure involving tissue from trees of the same species.

Where different species are involved a true graft would be far more difficult because of genetic incompatibility. What appears to be a true graft may be deceiving and there would be no way to know for sure without damaging the point of contact.

—Mike Coggeshall, District Forester



SYMPTOM: Indentations

DIAGNOSIS: Some indentations are caused by a canker, or fungus, which forms what appear to be “eyes” in the bark. The necrotic canker can actually wrap completely around the tree and kill it, but usually only slows the growth of the tree. This fungus can be spread but is not commonly found in trees older than 20 years of age.

You may recall one tree with a person and dog inside it. Forest gnomes may exist according to this picture. This gargantuan tree, a sycamore, has hollowed out to form a large cavity within. Most likely, this tree has been periodically flooded a number of times and lies in low ground where water saturates the soil. This wetness can often cause decay from the inside out. An old injury from logs floating by in a flood or logging damage can also cause the tree to decay. Sometimes, coon hunters will “smoke out” a raccoon hiding within and the fire will burn out the center of the already hollow tree. Not a place I would want to be sheltered during a storm because the tree is probably the tallest thing in the woods and a prime target for lightning.

—Brad Rody, District Forester

SYMPTOM: Gnarly Trees

DIAGNOSIS:

I thought that I would never see
A plant as gnarly as that tree,
And what has caused it such distress
To grow into such an ugly mess?

Could it be caused by site or genes
Or dirt compacted by machines
Which dig and fill to improve the land?
It could be more than a tree could stand.

Or are they like the human race
Which accompanies aging with a wrinkled face
And twisted joints and stiffened limbs.
Would they call us “old gnarly stems?”

—Steve Brandsasse, District Forester



WARNING

We know there are more weird trees out there. We advise you to always take the following precautions:

1. Never go to the woods without a camera
2. Be sure to have plenty of film (or disc space and battery power if shooting digital)

DO NOT BE CAUGHT IN THE WOODS UNPREPARED!

